



WE&ME FOUNDATION · WWTF GMBH · SCIENCE4ME

Information Session

WE&ME Projects Call & Emerging Leader Award

7th July 2026

Dr. Benjamin Missbach — Call Manager, WWTF GmbH



Agenda

- Welcome — the WE&ME Foundation & partners
- The WE&ME Projects Call
 - Scope, requirements & what we fund
 - Study population, patient involvement & evaluation
 - Two-stage process & timeline
- The WE&ME Emerging Leader Award
- Cross-cutting principles & how to apply
- Q & A

1



SECTION 01

Welcome & the WE&ME Programme



WE&ME Mission

“With a sense of urgency, we advocate for recognition, education and research to ensure that every person with ME/CFS receives the compassionate and effective care and support they deserve, and ultimately a cure.”

→ <https://www.weandmecfs.org>



A patient-driven funding programme

The WE&ME Research Funding Programme is a **EUR 2 million initiative** supporting basic research into ME/CFS and post-acute infectious diseases, running from 2026 to 2029.

It is funded by the **WE&ME Foundation** and managed by **WWTF GmbH** in Vienna, in cooperation with **Science4ME**.

CORE PRINCIPLES

- Basic research focus, not outcome-chasing
- International, no geographic restrictions
- Patient-centred: patients as co-designers, applicants, and jury
- Low-barrier design with transparent eligibility and evaluation criteria, especially for early-career researchers

TWO FUNDING Activities

WE&ME Projects: competitive research calls (2026, 2029)

WE&ME Award: annual recognition awards for early career researchers (2026–2029)

! CO-DEVELOPED PROGRAMME WITH JURY AND PATIENT REPRESENTATIVES!



Two funding activities in 2026

FUNDING ACTIVITY 01

Projects Call

- ~7 projects funded worldwide
 - EUR 120,000 – 180,000 per project
 - 18 – 24 months, teams of 2–3 PIs
 - Two-stage application via WE&ME Funding Portal
- **Short Proposal Deadline 1: 25 Aug 2026**
- **Full Proposal Deadline 2: 10 Nov 2026 (invite-only approx. 20-25 proposals)**

FUNDING ACTIVITY 02

Emerging Leader Award

- 2 awards of EUR 5,000 each
- For outstanding early-career researchers
- By nomination, application by email
- Developed jointly with Science4ME
- **Deadline: 15 Oct 2026**



2

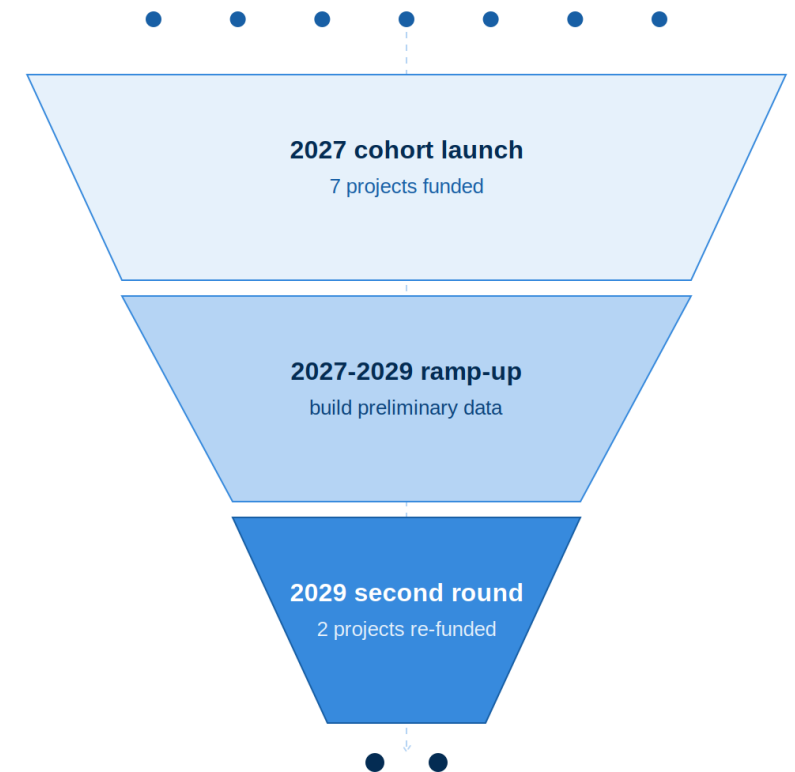
SECTION 02

The WE&ME Projects Call



BIG Picture

Fund projects that generate substantial preliminary Data within max 2 years AND will be allowed to compete in the second round of → invite-only funding in 2029.





Call facts at a glance

FUNDING & DURATION

What is funded

- Approx. 7 projects, subject to quality
- EUR 120,000 – 180,000 per project
- Duration 18 – 24 months
- Personnel & non-personnel costs (non-personnel max. 40%)
- Overheads max. 10% of budget

WHO CAN APPLY

Eligibility

- Core team of 2 or 3 Principal Investigators
- University / non-profit research institutions
- Open internationally — no geographic limits
- Industry may collaborate in-kind (not funded)
- Early-career researchers encouraged

→ funding.weandmecfs.org



Scope — what we fund

- Research advancing understanding of the **biological mechanisms of ME/CFS**.
- Pilot and exploratory studies welcome; **preliminary data not required** but strengthens proposals.
- Deliberately **broad in methodology**: novel hypotheses, underexploited methods, understudied subtypes, new biological frameworks.
- Single-discipline and interdisciplinary teams both welcome.
- **Researchers new to ME/CFS bringing transferable methods are explicitly encouraged.**
- Post-acute infection cohorts eligible if participants meet ME/CFS diagnostic criteria.



Baseline requirements

- Every proposal must satisfy all four:
 - Focus on ME/CFS (an ME/CFS cohort within a larger study is permissible)
 - A clearly stated innovative aspect of the approach or method
 - Meaningful, feasible patient involvement beyond study participation
 - Excellent team with track record relative to the scientific ambition



Out of scope

- Large-scale clinical trials (Phase II or III)
- Exclusive Long COVID cohorts
- Purely descriptive or epidemiological studies without a mechanistic question
- Quality-improvement or standard-care evaluation projects
- Clinical outcome / pure questionnaire studies; psychosomatic interventions
- Replication without new mechanistic insight or a novel angle
- Mixing post-COVID organ-damage patients into ME/CFS cohorts without separation



Study population & diagnostic criteria

Accepted diagnostic criteria (one required per case)

- Canadian Consensus Criteria (CCC / revised CCC)
- International Consensus Criteria (ICC)
- IOM 2015 Diagnostic Criteria

Key rules

- State pre-pandemic (onset < Jan 2020) vs post-pandemic onset
- PEM is necessary but not sufficient; severely affected patients encouraged where feasible

Cohort composition → describe access and stratification strategy



Patient involvement is mandatory

- People with lived experience need to be research partners, not just study subjects.
 - Every proposal needs a Patient Involvement Plan across the project lifecycle.
 - Examples: co-design of questions & protocols, advisory roles, dissemination, co-authorship.
 - Patient experts can be compensated from the project budget.
 - Tokenistic involvement is assessed negatively.
- **Stage 2: opportunity for open feedback on the S4ME forum**

Science for ME

Where Science and the ME/CFS Community Meet

[Home](#)[Forums](#)[What's new](#)[Members](#)[Calendar](#)[WE&ME / Ca...](#)[Search](#)[New posts](#) [Find threads](#) [Watched](#) [Search forums](#) [Mark forums read](#)

WE&ME / Call Management, the 'News in Brief' for the week beginning 29th June 2026 is here.

Science for ME

[New posts](#)[Post thread...](#)

Welcome to Science For ME

About the forum. Members can access our rules, guidance on using the forum and a section where members can introduce themselves.

 [Welcome: About the Forum, Our Values](#)

Threads
1

Messages
2



[Welcome](#)
Apr 20, 2024 · [Science For ME](#)

 [Welcome \(Members Only\)](#)

Threads
529

Messages
9.2K



[Members only](#) [Hi](#)
Today at 10:36 AM · [Trish](#)



[Welcome: Our Values, O...](#)

[How To's \(Read Only\)](#)

 [Introduce Yourself](#)

Community Lounge (Members Only)

A place for general chit chat, emotional and spiritual support, and to remember those we have lost. Also a place to access private subforums for collaborative projects

[Community Lounge](#)

Threads
1.9K

Messages
94.6K



[Members only](#) [When did you h...](#)
36 minutes ago · [Evergreen](#)



 [Members polls](#)

 [Emotional support](#)

 [In memory of ...](#)

 [Off-topic chit chat](#)

 [Spirituality](#)

 [Birthdays](#)

New Threads



[Trial Report](#) [Temelimab versus placebo in patients with post-COVID condition, 2026, Nehme et al.](#)

Started by SNT Gatchaman · 2 minutes ago · Replies: 0
[Long Covid research](#)



[Editorial: Fatigue in Disorders of Gut-Brain Interaction—An Important Symptom to Recognise 2026 Alger and van Gils](#)

Started by Andy · 16 minutes ago · Replies: 0
['Conditions related to ME/CFS' news and research](#)



[Members only](#) [Hi](#)
Started by mrbennet · Today at 1:05 AM · Replies: 9
[Introduce Yourself](#)



[Adjustment for index event bias in genome-wide association studies of subsequent events, 2019](#)

Every Project in the second round has the opportunity to discuss project ideas in the Science for ME forum (October – November 2026)



Team & eligibility

- One PI designated as Principal Investigator & Coordinator (PI&C) — signs the contract.
- All PIs affiliated to a university / non-profit research organisation; unaffiliated cannot be funded.
- Each core member submits a CV and relevant publications.
- A researcher may appear on max. 2 proposals in this call.
- Interdisciplinary teams encouraged (immunology, neuroscience, data science, etc.).
- Career breaks taken into account when assessing academic age.

Budget and Costs: Short Proposal only bulk sums & full proposal detailed budget

- **Eligible costs:** All costs must be directly attributable to the project.
- **Personnel costs:** salaries for staff working on the project, in line with the collective agreement of the host country, or with comparable national reference standards. Permanently employed senior staff already fully financed by the host institution may not claim salary.
- **Non-personnel costs** (max. 40% of budget): consumables, smaller equipment (up to EUR 1,500 per item), travel for scientific meetings, publication costs (Article Processing Charges for open access), workshop and meeting costs, third-party services.
- **Patient involvement costs:** compensation for patient experts and patient organisations contributing to the project (e.g. co-design, advisory roles, dissemination). Can be personnel or non-personnel costs.
- **Data management costs:** curation, storage, and deposit in trusted repositories. Can be personnel or non-personnel costs.
- **Overhead costs:** A maximum of 10% overhead costs of the project budget can be covered by the WE&ME foundation. As the WE&ME Foundation is a private non-profit foundation, financing of university infrastructure cannot be at the core of this highly-focused call.
- Ineligible costs
 - Basic infrastructure (rent, telephone, general utilities).
 - Acquisition of major equipment beyond pro rata project use.
 - Costs not directly attributable to the project.



Open Science

- Research data: FAIR and open by default
 - Data must be deposited in a trusted, discipline-appropriate repository. Accessibility must be granted by request and the most low-barrier repository must be chosen.
 - Data should be released no later than the publication of the corresponding results, and no later than twelve months after project end where no publication results.
- Open access publications
- Code and Software: Code developed in the project should be released under an open source license and deposited in a public repository
- **Pre-Registration:** Hypothesis-testing studies must pre-register primary and secondary outcomes before data analysis begins (Choose discipline-specific pre-registration repositories). Deviations from pre-registered outcomes must be documented and justified.



Ethics: ethics submission with Full Proposal; Ethics approval with project start

- Research involving human participants, identifiable human data, or animals requires approval from the relevant ethics committee or institutional review board.
- If approval is required, this must be clearly stated in the proposal
 - → **An acknowledgement of receipt from the ethics committee should be submitted with the full proposal.**
 - → **Final approval ("Votum") must be submitted to WE&ME Foundation before project start.**
- Projects involving severely affected ME/CFS patients should pay particular attention to the burden of participation and to informed consent in the presence of cognitive symptoms.



Content of the short proposal

- Project title, acronym, keywords and project duration
- Lay summary (max. 1,000 characters) and scientific abstract (max. 2,000 characters).
- Core team members: Short CVs, scientific competencies (max. 500 characters) and role of each core team member (max. 500 characters)
- **Project description** (max. 10,000 characters) covering: **research questions and main hypotheses; mechanistic relevance** to post-acute infection syndromes (PAIS) and ME/CFS; **proposed methods and innovative aspects; team composition; patient involvement and a clear study sample description: *applicants must specify the diagnostic criteria to be applied, indicate whether the cohort is pre-pandemic, post-pandemic, or both, and set out a credible recruitment plan. Describing a target sample without explaining how it will be accessed will not be considered sufficient.***
- Indicative **budget** (bulk sums, no detailed cost planning required at this stage)

Signatures from the authorised representatives of all involved institutions and partners



Evaluation criteria

- Scope fit → ME/CFS biological mechanisms & meets all formal requirements
- Scientific quality & originality
- Team track record & academic potential (relative to academic age)
- Patient involvement: meaningful & feasible
- Methodological rigour: pre-specified analysis plans
- Study population: rigorous criteria & realistic recruitment
- Feasibility, open science & data management



ME/CFS Jury Panel

CHAIR

Maureen Hanson

Cornell University, USA

Metabolism, immunology, biomarkers

S4ME Representative

Science4ME

Health ethics, clinical guidelines,
patient advocacy

Michal Tal

MIT, USA

Immunology, diagnostics, infection &
chronic inflammatory disease

S4ME Representative

Science4ME

Co-researcher, research methodology,
patient advocacy

Chris Ponting

Univ. of Edinburgh, UK

Genetics & bioinformatics

S4ME Representative

Science4ME

Mathematics,
analytical
and methodological
expertise

David Putrino

Mount Sinai, USA

Computational neuroscience
& rehabilitation

S4ME Representative

Science4ME

Paediatric radiologist

S4ME Representative

Science4ME

Dietician and research
scientist and systems
biology.

*3 out of 5 Science4Me Members have voting rights during the panel discussion



A two-stage process

STAGE 1 · OPEN

Short proposal

- Open to all eligible applicants
- Template-based; primary basis for selection
- Project description max. 10,000 characters
- Indicative budget (bulk sums)
- Assessed by ≥ 2 jury members

STAGE 2 · INVITE-ONLY

Full proposal

- ~3× as many teams invited as funded
- Detailed work plan, budget & methodology
- Open science, patient involvement, ethics
- Written feedback to all Stage 2 applicants
- No rebuttal stage — decisions are final



Timeline

- **15 June 2026 — Call launch, Stage 1 opens**
- **7 July 2026, 2 pm CET — Info session / webinar (today)**
- **25 August 2026, 2 pm CET — Short proposal deadline**
- **Late September 2026 — Invitations to Stage 2**
 - Written feedback provided to all Stage 2 applicants
 - S4ME Forum interaction
- **10 November 2026, 2 pm CET — Full proposal deadline**
- **Early December 2026 — Funding decisions (~7 projects)**
- **From January 2027 — Project start**

→ funding.weandmecfs.org



3

SECTION 03

The WE&ME Emerging Leader Award



Recognising two early-career leaders per year

WHO CAN BE NOMINATED

Eligibility

- PhD candidates or **8 years after PhD finished**
- Career breaks are taken into account
- Actively working in ME/CFS or related PAIS research
- Open to researchers from all countries

WHO NOMINATES

Nomination

- A senior researcher (faculty level), or
- A patient, patient rep or charity
- Joint nominations eligible
- Max. 2 candidates per nominator
- No nominator = not accepted



Application & evaluation

Application (max. 2 pages, template provided)

- Submitted by email to funding@weandmecfs.org
- Candidate section (~1.5 pp) + nominator section (~0.5 pp)

Evaluation criteria

- Research quality & significance
- Sustained commitment to the field & patient-centred research
- Career development potential & distinctiveness

Benefits & timeline

MORE THAN FUNDING

Award benefits

- EUR 5,000 for conference travel, research stays & presentation
- Integration into the WE&ME network & ME/CFS community
- A platform to present to international scientific & patient audiences
- Lasting connection to the WE&ME Foundation

KEY DATES

Timeline

- Nominations open: 15 June 2026
- **Application deadline: 15 October 2026**
- Announcement: December 2026
- Decision by the WE&ME Board of Directors
- No rebuttal stage



4

SECTION 04

Cross-cutting principles & how to apply



Principles for all funded work

OPEN SCIENCE

FAIR & open

- Research data FAIR & open by default
- Open-access publications; APCs eligible
- Code released under open-source licence
- Pre-registration & transparent reporting

GENDER, DIVERSITY & ETHICS

Equity by design

- Early-career & under-represented researchers encouraged
- Career breaks considered in evaluation
- Sex & gender considered where relevant
- Ethics approval before project start



How to apply

PROJECTS CALL

Funding Portal

- Register at <https://funding.weandmecfs.org/calls/>
- Create a Proposal
- Invite PI&C and co-PIs to the project
- Complete profile, roles & short proposal
- **Only the PI&C can submit!!!**
- Deadline 25 Aug 2026, 2 pm CET

EMERGING LEADER AWARD

By email

- Use the provided 2-page template
- Include candidate & nominator sections
- Email to funding@weandmecfs.org
- Deadline 15 Oct 2026

Q & A

Contact

- Dr. Benjamin Missbach — Call Manager, WWTF GmbH
 - Grace Liu PhD — Call Manager, WWTF GmbH
- funding@weandmecfs.org · +43 1 402 31 43 19

Resources

- Projects Call documents & templates: <https://www.weandmecfs.org/weme-projects/>
- Award Call documents & templates: <https://www.weandmecfs.org/weme-emerging-leader-award/>